THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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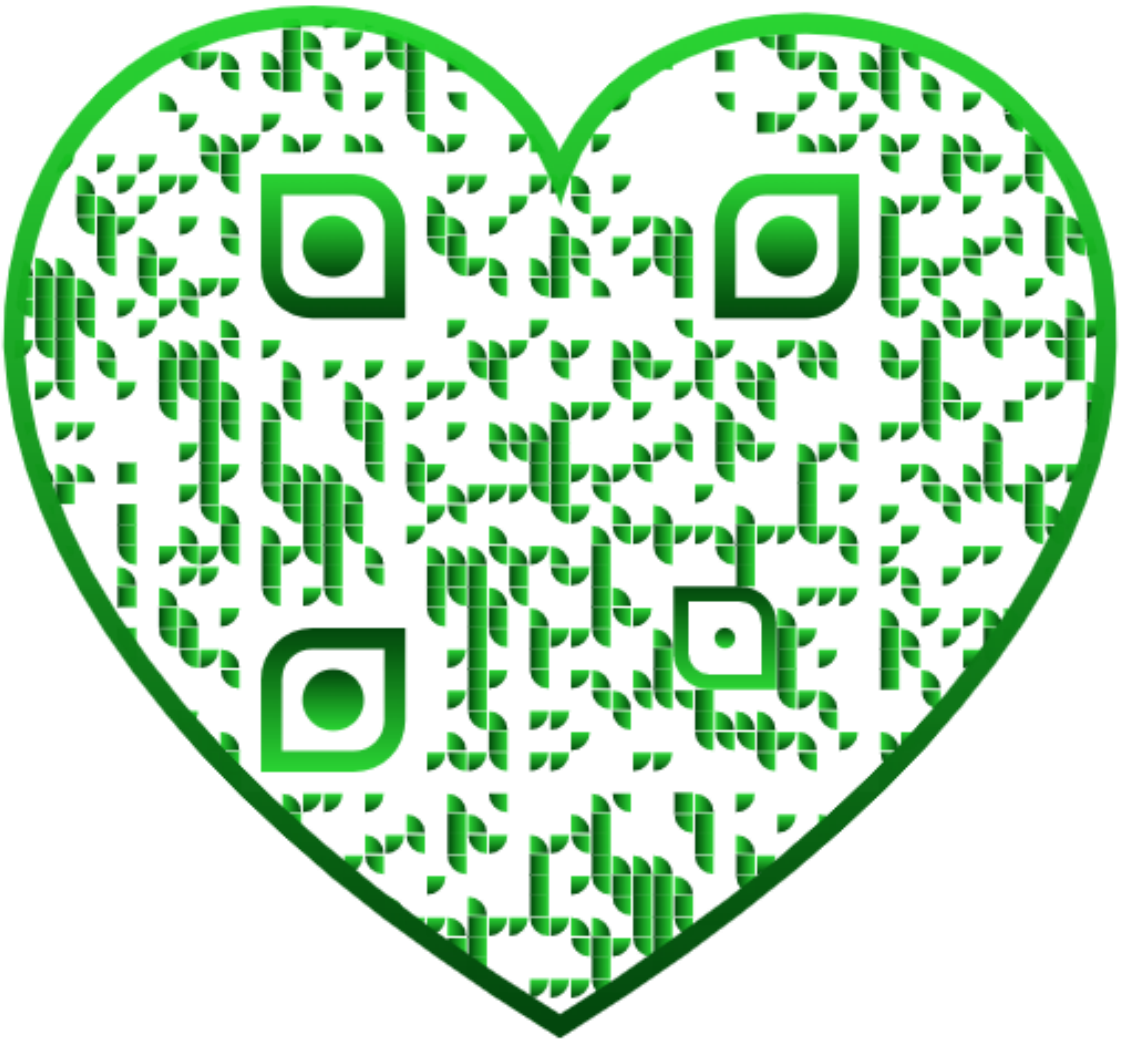
Aus & NZ $1.85 IR 95p SA R1.85 US $1.85



THE HISTORY OF ROCK

Published weekly by Orbis Publishing Limited
Orbis House, 20/22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

Volume 7 Issue 73

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Acknowledgements

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During the late Sixties, British folk music began to break out of the cultist environs of folk clubs and aim itself at a wider audience. The treatment of traditional folk ballads with electric instrumentation made for a potent blend and won a large and devoted following for such groups as Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span. The acoustic, yet unorthodox folk-based sounds of Pentangle, the Incredible String Band and Roy Harper were also successful in capturing a share of the rock market.

The History of Rock Price U.K. 75p I.R. 95p Aus. & N.Z. $1.85 S.A. R1.85 U.S.A. $1.85.
How to obtain copies of The History of Rock Copies are obtainable by placing a regular order at your newsagent or by taking out a subscription. **Subscription rates:** For six months (26 issues) £23.00; for one year (52 issues) £46.00. Send your order and remittance to Rock Subscriptions, Punch Subscriptions Services, Watling Street, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK2 2BW., being sure to state the number of the first issue required.
Back numbers **U.K. & Eire:** Back Nos. are obtainable from your newsagent or from **History of Rock** Back Nos. Orbis Publishing Ltd., 20/22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT at cover price. **Australia:** Back Nos. are obtainable from **The History of Rock** Back Nos., Gordon and Gotch (Aus) Ltd, 114 William Street, PO Box 767G, Melbourne, Vic 3001. **New Zealand, South Africa, Europe & Malta:** Back Nos. are available at cover price from your newsagent. In case of difficulty write to the address in your country given for binders. South African readers should add sales tax.
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Southern Comfort

New directions and old favourites from below the Mason Dixon line

To many members of the liberal rock community of the late Sixties, the South stank of bigotry and oppression. Many Southern musicians resented this glib scapegoating, however, and attempted to affirm their pride in their background – though some, like Lynyrd Skynyrd (above), appeared to condone the worst aspects of Southern history.

AMONG THE MANY CONFLICTS that rack the American soul and disturb the nation's delicate equilibrium, the struggle between the South and the North is probably one of the deepest-felt and most significant. It began with the very origins of modern America, in the differences between Southern plantation life and the Northern manufacturing communities, and solidified over the bloody issue of slavery. The Civil War of 1861-65 – the culmination of the South-North conflict – was the most catastrophic episode in a struggle that has helped shape America.

The conflict between North and South has never been narrowly political, much less simply geographic. It has always been more about ideas and attitudes; at one time the South was identified with agriculture-based values, the North with industry-based values. The struggle between South and North has been seen, at different times, as a struggle between conservatism and liberalism, freedom and restraint, tradition and progress, family and community, moralism and pragmatism, but what matters is the struggle itself.

Since the Second World War, the South has become an umbrella term for all the states in a broad arc from California to Virginia – the so-called Southern Rim or New South. They house the main centres of America's profitable new industries (electronics, entertainment and oil); they have provided many of the country's presidents; they beam the sun-tanned, peach-fed image of modern America across the world in the shape of country and country-based music, films like *Smokey And The Bandit* (1977) and TV shows like 'Dallas'. Rock music has reflected this upturn of the South's fortunes.

Rock King

Fifties rock'n'roll was largely a Southern music – because its components, like blues and rockabilly, were rooted in Southern experience, and because it saw itself as essentially a rebel music nurtured outside the New York music business establishment and identifying with

the needs and values of the young, the poor and the angry. Rock'n'roll changed the face of contemporary culture. It elevated a poor, Southern white boy named Elvis Presley to the rank of king. Elvis was born in Tupelo, Mississippi, and recorded and spent most of his life in Memphis; Fats Domino was born and recorded in New Orleans; Gene Vincent, born in Norfolk, Virginia, recorded there and in Nashville; Buddy Holly, born in Lubbock, Texas, recorded in Clovis, New Mexico. And, although Eddie Cochran spent his childhood in Oklahoma and Minnesota, from 1949 he lived in Southern California and started his professional life as a rockabilly singer playing the American Southwest.

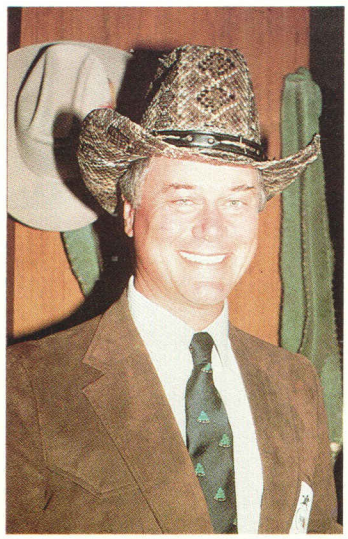
One important aspect of the relationship between rock'n'roll and the South is the way in which Southern-based independent record companies like Houston's Duke/Peacock, Memphis' Sun and Dot of Gallatin, Tennessee, blossomed with rock'n'roll's mass appeal. By the late Fifties, the South and Southern music – in one form or another – had become the focus of activity for a large portion of the American record industry. What had once been a minority music (whether it was country or blues-based) was, in the guise of rock'n'roll, rapidly attracting a wider audience.

Art and soul

Under the influence of British groups, a European sensibility had entered rock. Dylan and his contemporaries had developed their music in the heavily intellectual atmosphere of New York coffee houses. Folk-rock and Sixties R&B often consciously overshot their Southern ancestry in laying claim to even deeper roots in European or African folk music. And, to top it all, rock had achieved a respectability and artistic credibility signalled by reviews in 'quality' newspapers, performances in opera houses and praise from 'radical chic' circles in America and Europe.

The raunchy, teen-obsessed, extrovert burst of energy that was Fifties rock'n'roll had given way to more politically aware and introspective meditations. The album market had grown considerably, and performers, critics and record executives alike talked of 'art rock', 'the poetry of rock' and 'rock as the cultural expression of a generation'. The South still pursued the old rock'n'roll formula that pitted restless energy against the thoughtfulness of so much of the music that emerged in the Sixties. Most spectacularly, it had the Muscle Shoals' studio in Florence, Alabama, and the Stax label in Memphis. These produced a variety of soul sounds featuring such artists as Percy Sledge, Joe Tex, Otis Redding and Booker T. and the MGs. (Later, TK Records of Hialeah, Florida, gave disco-funk a boost with records by Betty Wright, George McCrae and KC and the Sunshine Band.)

Most of the musicians working for these record companies were, in fact, white but, despite that, and despite the growing acceptance of country-rock, the South had, by the end of the Sixties, come to represent something totally alien to – and despised by – the mass of the rock audience. Kennedy had been killed there, as had Martin Luther King, and, in 1968, the man most reviled by the young of America was Texan president Lyndon B. Johnson.



Larry Hagman (above) starred as the unscrupulous J. R. Ewing in the popular TV series 'Dallas' – a dubious symbol of the new Southern prosperity. Creedence Clearwater Revival (below) were actually from San Francisco, but sought their inspiration in the swamplands.

The low point of the South's reputation was reached in 1969 with the film *Easy Rider*, which rode to worldwide success on its portrayal of what was effectively a state-of-war between hippie, acid-head rock-freaks and conservative, narrow-minded and vindictive Southerners. The film also demonstrated that, in their persistent 'searching for America', the rock-freaks were just as obsessed with tradition and the American identity as were their Southern redneck enemies.

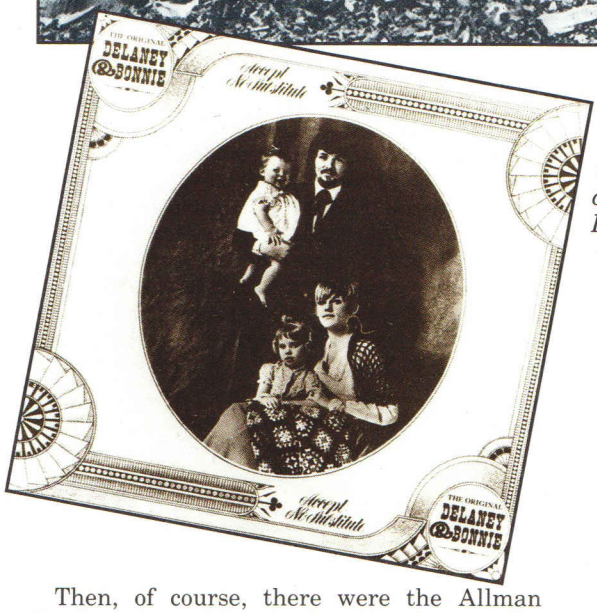
Pseudo South

One of the goals in America's constant search for identity is the simplicity of an unbroken tradition. This quest is underlined in the names of the heroes in *Easy Rider* (Captain America and Billy the Kid), in the rediscovery of country music by the Byrds (under the guidance of Gram Parsons, born in Florida but brought up in Georgia and New Orleans) and in the pursuit of a mythic America swathed in the corn-gold glory of the time-honoured rural verities of independence, stoicism, good humour and fellowship.

Thus in the late Sixties, when America seemed to be moving towards hippiedom and art rock, it was perhaps inevitable that there should be a reverse movement – something concerned with traditional America, and, perhaps naturally, the South. But this was not the *real* South – it was the South of the *mind*, the South as seen from Berkeley. It was the *idea* of the South that gripped the imagination of those seeking refuge from a world grown over-complicated. Rockers seeking their 'roots' thus found them in a Memphis and New Orleans of their own invention.

After the Byrds, a San Francisco band called Creedence Clearwater Revival, with a succession of tight, three-minute singles with titles such as 'Proud Mary', 'Born On The Bayou', 'Bad Moon Rising' and 'Up Around The Bend', evoked images of river boats, Louisiana swamps and gambling men. Others took up the formula. Bob Dylan's backing group, the Band – with Levon Helm from Arkansas and the rest from Canada – played to the gallery with numbers like 'Cripple Creek', 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down', 'King Harvest' and 'Across The Great Divide'. Delaney Bramlett, a gospel-influenced guitarist from Mississippi, and Bonnie Lynn, who had recorded in Memphis, formed Delaney and Bonnie and Friends (among the friends were Eric Clapton, Dave Mason and George Harrison) to play what Delaney called 'a country sort of gospel'.

Session man Leon Russell (from Oklahoma) worked with them, as did Rita Coolidge and Joe Cocker – among others – in pursuit of a similar, but choral-inflected gospel sound. One of the biggest Russell-directed hits of the time was Joe Cocker's 'Delta Lady' (the delta being that of the Mississippi). Another session man, Joe South (from Atlanta) had a smash hit under his own name in 1969 with 'Games People Play' – a 'Southern hypocrisy' song in the same vein as Jeannie C. Riley's 'Harper Valley PTA' and Bobby Charles' later 'Small Town Talk'. Yet another session man, Mac Rebennack, emerged in 1968 as Dr John with a sound that cleverly combined the voodoo chants and R&B of his New Orleans hometown.



The Allman Brothers Band (above) were one of the pillars of the new Southern rock music, along with husband-and-wife duo Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett (left).

Then, of course, there were the Allman Brothers, born in Nashville, who moved to Los Angeles and then to Florida before settling in Macon, Georgia. They gave up psychedelia in the late Sixties, changing their name from Hourglass, to create the closest thing to an electrified country blues there has been in rock.

Rockin' the White House

The image that went along with it – somewhere between outlaws, farmers and patrician slave-owners – was perhaps the definitive statement of 'new' Southern values. Signing to Capricorn in Macon – a label owned by Phil Walden, the white manager of black artists including Clarence Carter and Percy Sledge – the Allmans became the hub of a small family of bands pursuing much the same sound and goal. Their identification with the New South was completed when it was revealed that Georgia state governor Jimmy Carter was a friend of Walden. Benefit concerts from Walden's stable of bands later boosted Carter's Presidential campaign.

By the mid Seventies, Southern rock had come into its own. Florida-based band Lynyrd Skynyrd answered Neil Young's *Easy Rider*-era attack on Southern values, 'Southern Man', with their 1975 hit 'Sweet Home Alabama'. A couple of years later, Jimmy Carter (then US president) invited the Atlanta Rhythm Section to play at the White House, and the South suddenly had a whole host of rock musicians to stand alongside Burt Reynolds, J. R. Ewing, Coca Cola and Silicon Valley as symbols of its curious victory over the North. GARY HERMAN

LEON RUSSELL

From Asylum Choir to the Mad Dogs tour

THE IMPORTANCE OF the piano in rock was undeniably established by Fats Domino and Jerry Lee Lewis, but it is sometimes forgotten that Leon Russell was a vital catalyst in its rise to prominence. This neglect is probably due to Russell's withdrawn offstage personality. His deep, brooding intensity often scared those who didn't know him well, but it was the key to his musical genius. In 1971 Russell stated, revealingly, that he'd learned to play the piano by imagining himself 'lashed to a speedboat heading towards a rock'. One mistake and he would crash. This kind of fanaticism made him a technical master; it also made him, at times, difficult for others to understand.

Russell was born on 2 April 1941 in Lawton, Oklahoma, and emerged during the late Fifties playing white gospel piano and rock guitar. He was part of a small circle of musicians – David Gates, the late Carl Radle, Johnny (now J.J.) Cale – who developed their own kind of rockabilly on the Kansas/Oklahoma borders and went on to become internationally known musicians in other styles. Russell was a vital part of this local 'Tulsa Bop' and his expertise led to gigs with Ronnie Hawkins' band, the Hawks. He also played piano on David Gates' records for East-West,. for the Strangers on KCM and on Jerry Adams' sides for the Oklahoma Wheel label.

His own recordings, made in 1959 under the name of Russell Bridges, showcased his frantic Jerry Lee Lewis piano style. 'Swanee River' and 'All Right', cut at Oklahoma's WKY radio station and leased to Chess, surfaced on various rockabilly compilations in the Seventies. During the early Sixties Russell played briefly in Jerry Lee Lewis' road band. By 1962, he had moved to Los Angeles where he obtained work as a full-time session pianist. He played on Walter Brennan's Top Five hit, 'Old Rivers', and on numerous sessions for Phil Spector (the Crystals, Ronettes, Righteous Brothers) as well as Herb Alpert and Terry Melcher (who fixed sessions with the Byrds). Russell went completely commercial in 1965 to work on most of the biggest hits produced by Gary Lewis and the Playboys. This move did little for his professional reputation as a performer, but it must have increased his studio experience as a record producer as well as boosting his bank balance.

In 1966, Gary Lewis was drafted and sent to Vietnam. A year later, producer Snuff Garrett recommended Russell to write and produce for Harpers Bizarre. Their first album was a tremendous success, and 'Feelin' Groovy', which Russell had arranged, hit the top of the US charts in just a few months.

'Misty' mistake

With the money made from Gary Lewis and the Harpers, Russell produced his own first record – an uptempo, C&W version of Errol Garner's 'Misty' – in 1965. The style was at odds with the material, and the combination didn't work. The disc was issued as a single and reappeared later on the first *A&M Bootleg Album*. The failure of 'Misty' was a setback for Russell, both financially and in terms of his career. But his prospects began to improve when he teamed up with a husband-and-wife duo whose musical ideals coincided with his own. This was Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett – a unique combination of his laid-back country-soul style and her full-blooded white blues.

Their first album together was *Accept No Substitute* (1969). Delaney and Russell arranged the entire album, and the latter's piano is heard prominently. This album records Russell's first meeting with the members of the group that was later to become Mad Dogs and Englishmen. It also marked Russell's first public appearance with his lover, Rita Coolidge. What she meant to him in terms of moral and artistic support cannot be over-estimated. She was with him at the peak of his career; she inspired him to some of his finest achievements; and when she left him in 1972 his music lost much of its frenetic energy.

Touring with the Bramletts gave Russell the opportunity to work on one of his greatest sessions. While in California, he met Marc Benno, an accomplished folk-rock performer. Benno was fired by Russell's neurotic energy; they worked together at the Skyhill Studios in Hollywood in the spring of 1968 and emerged with about an hour's worth of tape, which was edited down to 25 minutes and issued on the Smash label later that year as the *Asylum Choir* album.

This short album contains some of the most creative gospel-rock ever issued. From the very first track, 'Welcome To Hollywood', the listener is knocked out by the frantic energy of Russell's piano and vocals and the power of his guitar work. Benno is featured on guitar, bass and

Leon Russell played his way from session man (above with Marvin Gaye and the Blossoms) to solo superstar (left).

drums. Extraneous sounds and a crazy overlay of horns playing impossible figures at a sped-up tempo are blended into the overall musical fabric.

Ironically, *Asylum Choir* was denounced for its originality. It suffered too from a promotional blunder, being released the same month as the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*. Both albums used an overdubbed orchestra, but in very different ways, and the critics dismissed the lesser-known act; the album didn't sell and Smash deleted it a year later. *Asylum Choir II* was belatedly issued in 1971.

Gimme Shelter . . .

After this disappointment, Russell went back on the road with the Bramletts. Then in 1969, Blue Thumb Records started a subsidiary label called Shelter. Russell and his producer friend, Denny Cordell, bought a share in the label and started to look for new quality talent to sign up, rather than famous names. They managed to attract excellent unknown artists such as Freddie King and J. J. Cale – but the famous names came too. Russell was joined by Delaney, Bonnie, Rita, Jim Gordon and Bobby Whitlock from the touring outfit, plus B. J. Wilson, Stevie Winwood, Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Ringo Starr, Klaus Voorman, Charlie Watts, Bill Wyman, Joe Cocker and Chris Stainton for the recording of his first solo album. It was the first time most of them had worked with Russell in the studio, but they were inspired by his dedication and the talent flashed like lightning.

Russell wrote all but one of the songs, including 'Delta Lady', written about Coolidge, and 'A Song For You'; both became rock classics. Cordell quickly arranged a tour to plug *Leon Russell*, and it was acclaimed by the critics.

Mad Dogs

On 11 March 1970 a chain of events began which was to set the seal on Russell's fame. Joe Cocker flew into Los Angeles planning to rest after gruelling months on the road. The following day, Dee Anthony of Bandana Management pushed him into a seven-week tour, to begin in Detroit eight days later. Hearing of Cocker's plight, Russell offered his services in rounding up a supporting band. Someone made the inspired suggestion that the entire tour, which was to climax in a two-day engagement at Bill Graham's Fillmore East, be filmed. That film and the two-record set which emerged from the Fillmore concerts was *Mad Dogs And Englishmen* – and it made Russell a star.

Russell turned in an unforgettable performance. Dressed in jeans, T-shirt and top hat, he was continually coaching, cheering, leading, rehearsing, arranging and playing. If Cocker was the group's head, Russell was its heart and soul. The original soundtrack still holds up as one of the most exciting live albums ever.

When Mad Dogs broke up in May 1970, Russell entered his most hectic 18 months. He recorded a post-tour album on Shelter in four different studios. He performed concerts on both coasts. He co-wrote and recorded an album with Clapton, co-wrote and recorded 'Watching The River Flow' with Bob Dylan, and played with George Harrison on the single 'Bangla-Desh', which he also produced. On 12 August 1971 he was one of the stars in a mammoth concert at New York's Madison Square Garden as a benefit for Bangladesh. At the top of his form, Russell gave stunning performances of 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' and 'Young Blood'. The concert was recorded and filmed.

Russell was a performer in demand, and the future looked promising. But then legal troubles beset Shelter Records when National Comics sued them for copying their trademark, an inverted Superman 'S'

on an eggshell. Russell and Cordell fought a bitter battle, and eventually lost.

Further trouble was in store for Russell. In early 1972 on a visit to Britain to play with Stainton and Clapton, it was reported that he had suffered a nervous breakdown. The 18 months of work and stress had taken their toll even on this most energetic of performers. Many feared he'd never perform again; or, if he did, that it wouldn't be the same.

His first album after recovery, *Carney*, would have been considered a fine achievement coming from any other artist; indeed, it reached Number 2 in the US album charts in 1972. But to some of his followers, Russell's new mellowness betrayed a weakness of spirit, an admission of defeat from a man who was sick of the financial and political side of the music business. As he sang in the hit single from the album, 'Tight Rope': 'I'm on a high wire/One side's life, and one is fire/But the top hat on my head is all you see.'

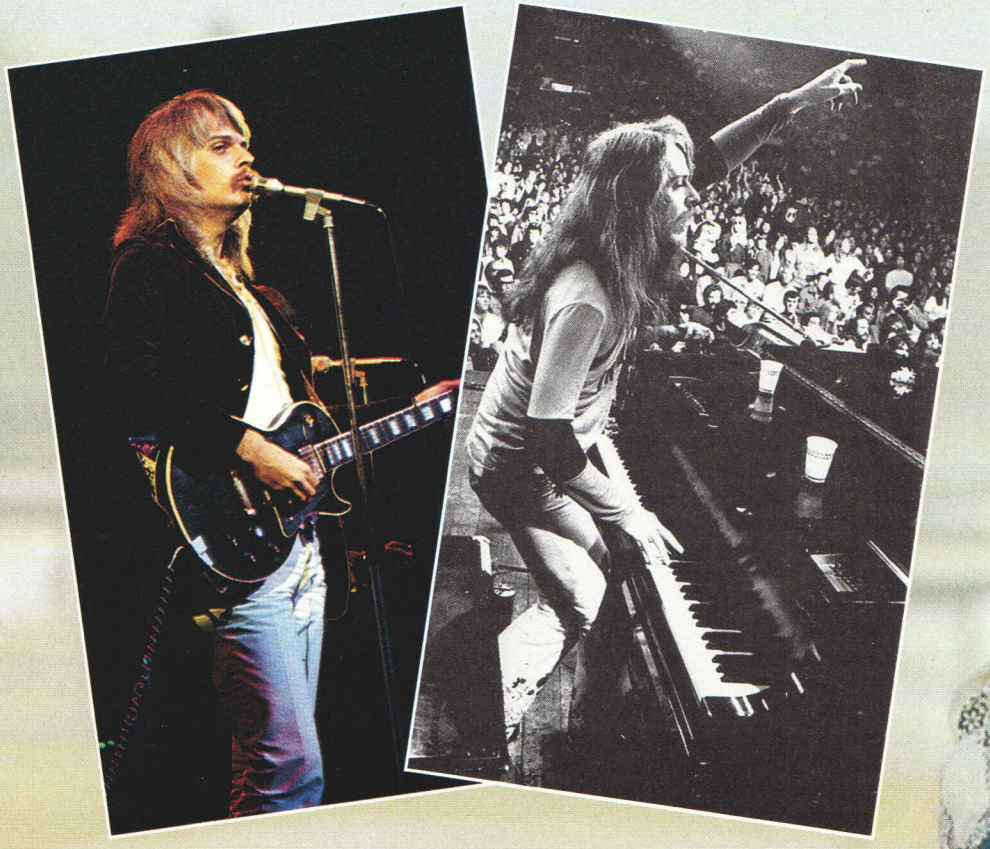
Country and jazz

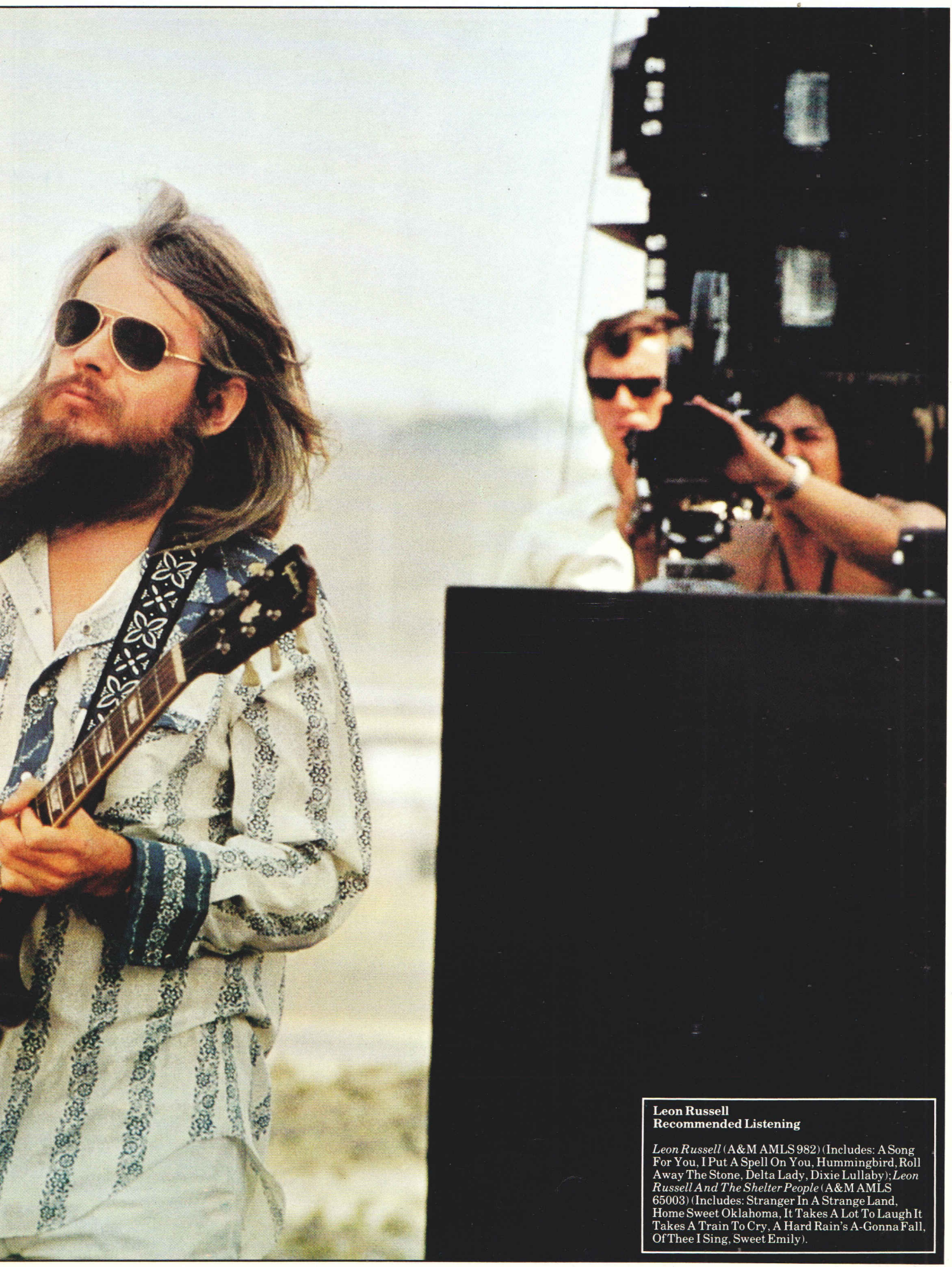
After 1972 Russell's music reflected the steady and calming influence of Mary McCreery, who became his wife, though he still continued to explore alternative musical styles. The albums of this period include *Leon Live* (1973), his second Top Ten album, the country LP *Hank Wilson Is Back* (also 1973), *Stop All That Jazz* (1974) and his venture into soul with Mary, *Make Love To The Music* (1977). He has subsequently performed on television with her and an old friend, country-and-western star Willie Nelson.

Russell's career falls into two distinct phases – before and after his breakdown, the first phase being more spontaneous and creative, and the second lacking in the drive and lustre that used to be his trademark. The energy of Russell's music during the earlier period had the explosive impact of a train hurtling out of a tunnel. And that's something which, on record at least, the listener can treasure forever.

STEPHEN M STROFF

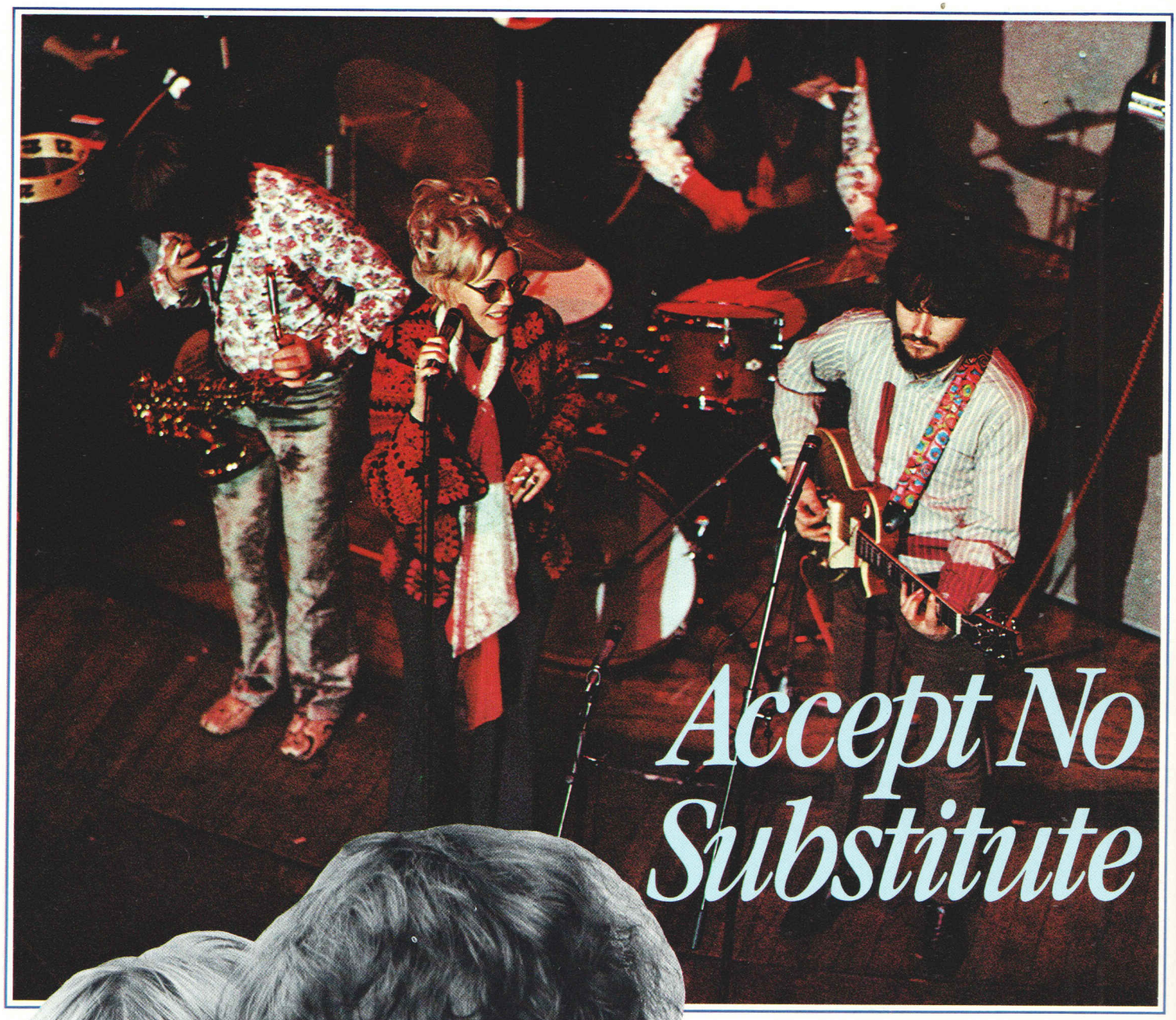
Although Leon Russell will be remembered for the ferocious, driving energy of his piano playing (inset below right), he was also an able and effective guitarist (right). His guitar-playing was amply demonstrated when he appeared at London's Rainbow Theatre in 1972 (inset below left), sharing the stage with Eric Clapton once again two years after the Mad Dogs tour.





Leon Russell
Recommended Listening

Leon Russell (A&M AMLS 982) (Includes: A Song For You, I Put A Spell On You, Hummingbird, Roll Away The Stone, Delta Lady, Dixie Lullaby); *Leon Russell And The Shelter People* (A&M AMLS 65003) (Includes: Stranger In A Strange Land, Home Sweet Oklahoma, It Takes A Lot To Laugh It Takes A Train To Cry, A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall, Of Thee I Sing, Sweet Emily).



Accept No Substitute

Delaney and Bonnie's honest harmonies

THE STORY OF Delaney and Bonnie is something of an enigma. From being a unique and almost overnight success, they suddenly disappeared into insignificance. They did not lack excellence, and they had a tremendous following at the peak of their career. At their best, for a few heady months at the tail-end of 1969 and the start of 1970, they were the most exciting, explosive and fresh element on a tired and jaded rock scene.

At that time rock music was becoming increasingly introspective and improvisatory, with acts like Traffic, Pink Floyd and King Crimson in the vanguard. Delaney and Bonnie offered a unique and very welcome alternative to this trend. The sheer exhilaration of their live performances

set them apart from their self-absorbed peers. From the Beatles downwards, the rock business was momentarily captivated by them. Here, it was felt, was the act that could really put contemporary music back on the rock'n'roll rails.

The only group that had a comparable influence was Creedence Clearwater Revival – but, as their name implied, they were really revivalists, whereas Delaney and Bonnie, with an act that was a potent blend of soul, gospel and rock, seemed to be forging a new path. Indeed, they were inheritors of a blue-eyed soul tradition that began with the Righteous Brothers in 1964. It was hardly their fault that, as the Seventies progressed, the term acquired increasingly pejorative connotations.

Bowled over

Delaney Bramlett was born in Randolph, Mississippi, on 1 July 1939, and spent three years in the US Navy before leaving to try his luck in the rock business. He was particularly impressed by Jack Good's US television show, 'Shindig', and together with Joey Cooper formed the Shindogs, who became residents on the programme. They left the show in 1967, and in the same year Delaney met Bonnie Lynn while playing the Carolina Lanes Bowling Alley in Los Angeles. Five days later, they were married. Bonnie (born 8 November 1944) had grown up in Granite City, Illinois, and at the age of 15 she was singing in jazz clubs in St Louis. By the time she met Delaney, she had served a valuable apprenticeship as a backing vocalist for Fontella Bass and Albert King, and had also become the first white member of Ike and Tina Turner's Ikettes.

Delaney and Bonnie put together a quite remarkable backing group which, for want of a better name, they referred to simply as the Friends. One of the first people with whom Delaney had become acquainted in Los Angeles was Leon Russell; he readily joined the band and helped to give it a strong Oklahoma flavour by bringing in bassist Carl Radle and the then-unknown J. J. Cale on guitar.

Over the course of the next two years other recruits were added – Jim Keltner, Bobby Whitlock, Jim Price, Bobby Keys and Rita Coolidge. Delaney and Bonnie had made their initial recording efforts without the powerful support of the Friends, however, and in both cases the tapes were shelved until after the duo's precipitate rise to fame.

The reputation of the Friends remained confined for some time to Los Angeles, where they were giving increasingly mature and exuberant performances. Although they came to the attention of celebrities such as George Harrison, the troupe were barely making ends meet because there were so many of them.

Things began to change in 1969 when, in the summer, they were signed to Elektra Records and, in September, joined the Blind Faith US tour. By that time, they had recorded *Accept No Substitute*, the title of which was a fair reflection of the charisma already surrounding the band. Produced by David Anderle, the album successfully captured the fire and fervour of their music. It was to prove the best Delaney and Bonnie album.

Influential friends

By the time the Blind Faith tour started, J. J. Cale had quit, but the Friends, though third on the bill, proved a great attraction – so much so that Eric Clapton was caught up in the excitement. He had already left Cream to change musical direction and now he left Blind Faith to change direction again. His contribution proved invaluable – not only did he volunteer his services as a Friend, he also arranged to co-promote a UK and European tour for the group in conjunction with his manager, Robert Stigwood.

Opposite: Delaney and Bonnie on stage (top) and in marital bliss (below). Above: George Harrison (top left) and Eric Clapton (centre) were among the Bramletts' backing musicians in 1969.

Despite the support of such a prominent personality as Clapton, Elektra expected so little from these dates that they didn't release *Accept No Substitute* in Britain. George Harrison quickly snapped up the UK rights for the Beatles' Apple label, and even arranged to appear with the Friends on several dates. But though Clapton's presence was well advertised, Harrison's was strictly unannounced due to his personal reticence: he played rhythm guitar in the background. Because of the lack of publicity, some concert halls were only half-full for the early dates, but after a fortnight audience reaction was so positive that the show built up its own momentum, and Delaney and Bonnie were drawing capacity crowds.

A single, 'Comin' Home', made the UK Top Twenty, and tapes of another date at Croydon were released as a live album, *On Tour*. This was their most successful album, reaching Number 29 in the US album chart in 1970.

At this stage, it would have been easy to predict that Delaney and Bonnie's tremendous following would assure them superstardom for years to come. But what happened was that virtually everybody connected with the show achieved considerable fame during the following year – with the ironic exception of Delaney and Bonnie.

After playing some promising US dates, the Bramletts lost almost their entire band to Leon Russell, who was putting together a group to help out Joe Cocker on what became the Mad Dogs and Englishmen extravaganza. That tour became one of the most famous of all time, and received precisely the kind of acclaim that Delaney and Bonnie should have generated for their own concerts.

Parting shot

Bonnie was particularly bitter about the events of 1970, but she and Delaney were not immediately becalmed. The duo released *To Bonnie From Delaney*, which had moments of great inspiration, including a blistering version of 'Miss Ann', which featured a characteristically frenetic performance from Little Richard. After that came *Motel Shot*, which was somewhat disappointing, though *Together* recouped most of the duo's strengths.

In the end, marital disharmony destroyed any lingering hopes of a real commercial breakthrough, despite the occasional hit single; 'Never Ending Song Of Love' made the US Number 13 position in 1971. By the time they moved to CBS in the following year, one of the most promising double acts of 1969 had become two unexceptional solo performers.

So what went wrong? Apart from the disastrous loss of their band, two other difficulties are apparent. The first is that their style remained static and that there was no musical progression. Secondly there was the fact that their first four albums all appeared on different labels, so that Elektra had little incentive to promote *Accept No Substitute*, which was their best release.

After their breakup, neither Delaney nor Bonnie achieved much as a solo performer. Delaney was contracted to Tamla Motown's Prodigal label in 1977, and recorded *Class Reunion* with several old Friends, including Clapton and Harrison, but the album sank without trace. Bonnie had a slice of ill-luck when she signed to Capricorn shortly before the company collapsed. Later, she attracted some publicity through a liaison with Stephen Stills. After becoming a born-again Christian in 1980, she released a powerful gospel album, but it was much underrated.

BOB WOFFINDEN

Delaney And Bonnie
Recommended Listening

Accept No Substitute (Elektra EKS 74039)
(Includes: Get Ourselves Together, The Ghetto, Love Me A Little Bit Longer, I Can't Take It Much Longer, Soldiers Of The Cross, Gift Of Love).

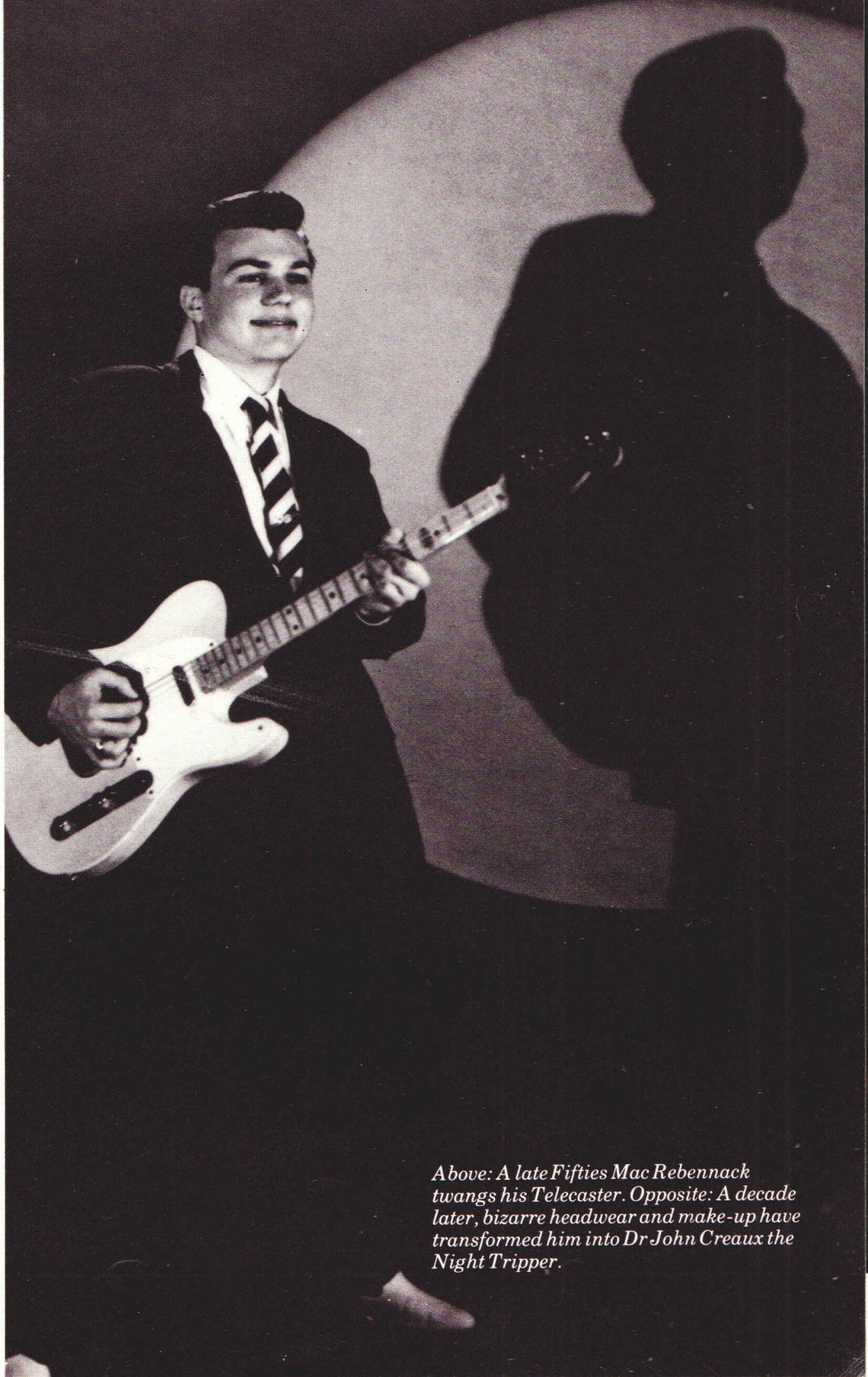
NIGHT TRIPPER

Dr John: medicine man or high priest of voodoo?

MALCOLM JOHN MICHAEL Creaux Rebennack, better known as Dr John, is an integral part of the unsurpassable New Orleans tradition of high-class funk. He is one of the Crescent City's great stylists, and his keyboard playing embodies the vital sound of an area that has yielded such unimpeachable musicians as Fats Domino, Professor Longhair, James Booker and Allen Toussaint. Dr John's story touches on so many parts of the local sound that his career virtually reads like a one-man almanac of the richest American musical tradition of all.

Session student

Born in New Orleans on 21 November 1940, he started listening to hillbilly music in his father's Garden District record store before graduating to the role of guitarist on countless sessions in the late Fifties and early Sixties. After learning his technique from Fats Domino's guitarist Walter Nelson, the teenage Rebennack sat in on sessions with saxophonist Lee Allen and contributed often uncredited parts for



Above: A late Fifties Mac Rebennack twangs his Telecaster. Opposite: A decade later, bizarre headwear and make-up have transformed him into Dr John Creaux the Night Tripper.

records on the Ace, Rex and Ebb labels. Mac played guitar on records by Professor Longhair, Huey Smith, Jimmy Clanton, Joe Tex, Frankie Ford and Charles Brown. He wrote 'Lights Out' for Jerry Byrne, 'What's Going On' for Art Neville, 'Losing Battle' for Johnny Adams and 'Lady Luck', which, pirated by Lloyd Price, reached the US Top Twenty in 1960.

Mac Rebennack cut his own debut disc, a Bo Diddley-styled guitar instrumental called 'Storm Warning', in 1959 and he subsequently recorded as Morgus and the Three Ghouls for the Vin label, under his own name for Ace and with Ronnie Barron as Drits and Dravy. By the early Sixties, he had become part of a pool of players (which included Booker and Toussaint) that the noted arranger Harold Battiste would call on to play on his All For One, a co-operative label that encouraged the cream of the area to back singers like Barbara George and Prince La La. Mac continued to work both as A&R man and journeyman writer, but the sheer abundance of talent in New Orleans at the time, not to mention the very nature of the star system then, made it hard for a musician to gain individual recognition.

More sinister was the racism endemic in the Southern music scene, where it was still considered unacceptable for black and white musicians to play together. Backing various singers, Rebennack would often be the only white man in the group. In doing this, he was skating thin ice with the players, all of whom needed to toe their union line to stay in business. The rigid rule of the unions and the thriving trade in bootleg recordings was accompanied by some highly unscrupulous dealings that affected Rebennack directly when he was shot through the hand in a bar-room brawl. He promptly moved out of town on the advice of some gangsters who probably didn't have his best interests at heart.

A step in the dark

Settling in Los Angeles, Mac rejoined Battiste to play on Sonny and Cher sessions. He also produced Jesse Hill and Shirley Goodman, and recorded for A&M under the name of the Zu Zu Blues Band. After being, on his own admission, 'severely strung out' for several years, Rebennack secured a deal with Atlantic, for whom he signed under the name Dr John Creaux the Night Tripper. The title of 'Dr' was inspired by Professor Longhair, while 'the Night Tripper' was an answer to the Beatles' 'Day Tripper'.

His career thereafter falls into distinct phases. The LPs *Gris Gris* (1968), *Babylon* (1969), *Remedies* (1970) and *Sun, Moon And Herbs* (1971) are notable for his mumbled incantations against hypnotic voodoo-inspired settings. 'Walk On Gilded Splinters' from *Gris Gris* was covered by Humble Pie, Johnny Jenkins and Marsha Hunt. Dr John became a fashionable figure, patronised by the likes of Mick Jagger and Eric Clapton, both of whom appeared on *Sun, Moon And Herbs*.

Dr John's next LP saw a drastic change of direction. *Gumbo* (1972), a tribute to the musicians of New Orleans, played down the 'voodoo' mannerisms – which were probably an artful contrivance intended to hoodwink gullible hippies and music journalists – in favour of an honest, rootsy R&B approach. One track off the album, 'Iko Iko', also gave Mac Rebennack his first hit single, reaching Number 71 in the US charts in April 1972. He toured Europe twice in the early Seventies, latterly with Allen Toussaint and the Meters. This revelatory musical experience probably brought the sound of Louisiana to a wider audience than any tour apart from those by Fats Domino.

Last tango in Hollywood

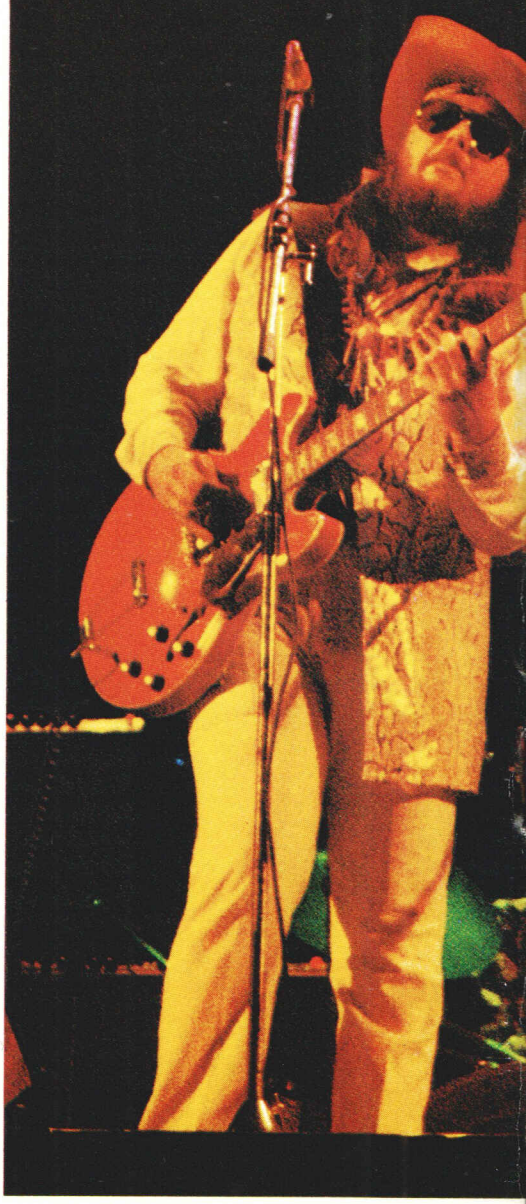
The third phase of the Dr John story found him working in harmony with Toussaint on *In The Right Place* (1973) and *Destively Bonaroo* (1974). As on *Gumbo*, Mac now displayed confidence to vocalise a lyric rather than use his throat as a spell-casting instrument. He was also concentrating on his highly economical yet soulful keyboard technique, fleshing out the sound with two intriguing instruments called the zigola and the muted fingernettes.

Despite the popularity of these albums (the first of which spawned two successful singles in 'Right Place, Wrong Time' and 'Such A Night'), Mac Rebennack parted company with Atlantic soon after and entered the fourth phase of his career, since when he has recorded infrequently, although *Hollywood Be Thy Name* (1975), *Tango Palace* (1979) and *Plays Mac Rebennack* (1982) are proof that there has been no dilution of his extraordinary talent.

Although Mac performed rarely in the early Eighties, he could still be seen at the New Orleans annual Jazz Heritage Festival, beguiling the faithful with his hallucinatory music, spells, incense and his bizarre costume of beads, head-dress and flowing astronomer's robes. He was, as always, a strangely compelling figure, playing to the hilt the part of Dr John . . . the Night Tripper.

MAX BELL

Above: Dr John tickles the ivories in the late Seventies. Below: On stage, Rebennack beguiles the faithful.



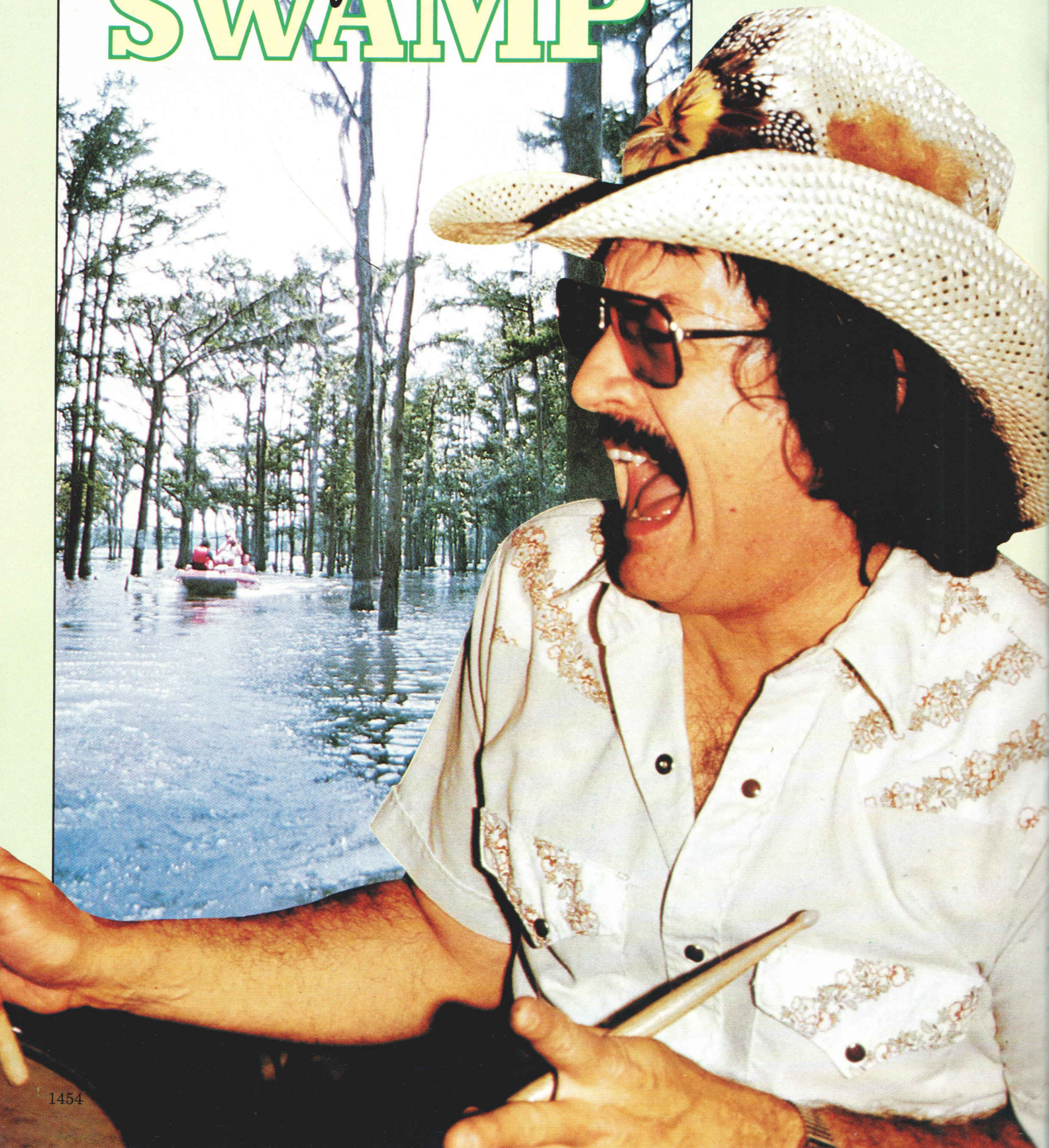
Dr John
Recommended Listening

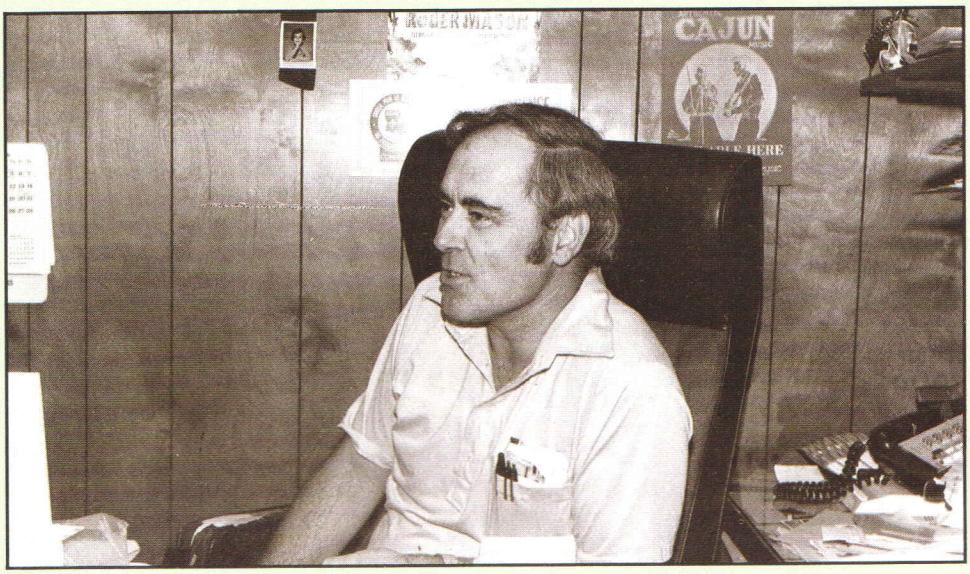
Gris Gris (Atlantic 588147) (Includes: Gris-Gris Gumbo Ya Ya, Mama Roux, Jump Sturdy, Danse Fambeaux, Croker Courtbullion); *Sun, Moon And Herbs* (Atlantic 2400 161) (Black John The Conqueror, Where Ya At Mule, Craney Crow, Familiar Reality).

SOUNDS *of the* SWAMP

Local heroes who rocked the everglades

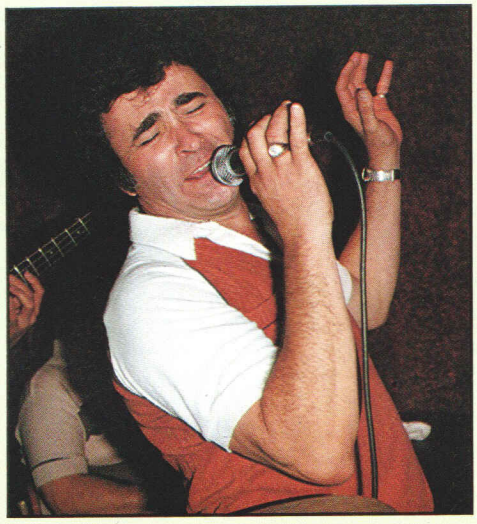
FOUR HUNDRED MILES of US highway run between Port Arthur, Texas in the West and New Orleans, Louisiana in the East. On either side of it are found the townships of South Louisiana and all the smaller settlements that spring to life in the songs and stories of cajun or swamp-pop. There are Lake Charles and Ville Platte, the home of





Floyd Soileau's Jin and Swallow labels; Abbeville, where Bobby Charles lives in hermit-like seclusion; Crowley, where Jay Miller recorded the finest Excello blues, and such outposts of swampland as the aptly-named Cut Off, Joe Barry's home.

Between 1958 and 1962, the US charts were alive with the sound of white singers and musicians from all these places. Five of the most influential were Joe Barry, Jivin' Gene, T. K. Hulin, Warren Storm and Rod Bernard, and for a brief period they captivated American record-buyers with a strange, eerie sound that was indigenous to south Louisiana, but alien to the general mainstream of popular music. The critics have called it swamp-pop, cajun-rock or bayou-beat, but to the locals it is simply south Louisiana music. Johnnie Allan, a singer whose local popularity has endured for 25 years, says: 'I guess the only way to describe it is to say that it's the musicians who make the sound different. Those guys, Jivin' Gene, T. K. Hulin – virtually all of them speak French. Their family names are French and some of them played in French accordion bands just like I did. Consequently, I think we all kept part of this French-cajun music ingrained in us; you can detect it, something of a cajun flavour in the song.'



Far left: Southern swampland – Atchafalaya basin, Louisiana. The sound of swamp-pop and bayou-beat is typified by the work of singers Warren Storm (opposite), Johnnie Allan (above) and cajun producer Floyd Soileau (top).

Local colour

The cajuns of south-west Louisiana are unique. Banished from Nova Scotia, the French settlers arrived in Louisiana in the 1760s and developed a distinctive and colourful music in virtual isolation. Cajun followers differentiate between traditional music – played on accordion, fiddle, rhythm guitar and triangle, with vocals in a French patois – and a more progressive but still authentic strain with a marked hillbilly influence, which can have the fiddle leading instead of the accordion.

The name of Joe Falcon, who made the first cajun records during the late Twenties, is synonymous with traditional cajun, while in the Eighties most South Louisiana groups play in the modern authentic style. A third category, pop- or Nashville-cajun, embraces Jimmy Newman and the Kershaw Brothers, musicians who strive for national recognition without losing their local identity. The best-known song from this third group is Rusty and Doug Kershaw's 'Louisiana Man', which boasts over 400 recordings. It evokes images of local life, describing muskrat skins drying in the sun and web-footed children named Ned or Mack who fish from a canoe called a pirogue and accompany Papa Jack on his trips to town.

Swamp-pop was born of many things. The first variation of it to reach the Hot Hundred was influenced as much by the intensity of early Elvis and the music of Fats Domino as the original French cajun style of Joseph Falcon. This batch of music was typified by Warren Storm's 'Prisoner's Song', which became a best seller in 1958, and Rod Bernard's 'This Should Go On Forever', which reached the US Top Twenty the following year. Although Fats Domino's infectious piano triplets and clipped vocals were particularly pervasive, meandering songs of other black New Orleans artists, Guitar Slim ('The Things I Used To Do') and Earl King ('Those Lonely Lonely Nights'), contributed much to the structure of swamp-pop. '"Those Lonely Lonely Nights",' explained Dr John, 'is a classic South Louisiana two-chord – E flat, B flat – slow ballad.'

The same simple chord progressions characterised most swamp-pop and, although whites enjoyed a greater success with this musical hybrid, black artists like Phil Phillips, whose 'Sea Of Love' reached Number Two in 1959, Elton Anderson and Cookie and the Cupcakes were prime exponents of the style. Cookie, otherwise Huey Thierry from Jennings, Louisiana, had got together a collection of local musicians including Shelton Dunaway, a vibrant singer whose voice was characteristic of the genre.

The 'Crazy Cajun'

Tiny, one-man record labels have always existed in south Louisiana towns, but aspiring swamp-rockers generally signed with Mercury, a label that had nationwide distribution. Mercury proved it could have hits with Southern music, and local producers Huey Meaux, George Khoury and Floyd Soileau developed strong ties with this major company. Meaux worked mostly in Texas and Mississippi although he was born in Kaplan, Louisiana and is widely known as the 'Crazy Cajun'. He first recorded Jivin' Gene in Port Arthur in 1959 and East Texas/South Louisiana sounds have characterised much of what he produced thereafter, including Freddy Fender's major hits of the mid Seventies, 'Before The Next Teardrop Falls' and 'Wasted Days And Wasted Nights'.

Floyd Soileau, who distributes almost every cajun label and produces a high percentage of cajun records on his own, is no less dedicated to what he calls 'south Louisiana rock'n'roll'. Like most Southern record producers, he had no wish to expand to compete with the nationals, and when a disc of his began to attract sales outside Louisiana, he automatically placed the master with a major label: Johnnie Allan's 'Lonely Days And Lonely Nights' (MGM), Joe Barry's 'I'm A Fool To Care' (Smash) and Rod Bernard's 'This Should Go On Forever' (Argo) were all Soileau's records, as was Tommy McLain's 1966 million-seller 'Sweet Dreams' (MSL).

These unexpected, even accidental breakthroughs into the pop field have since become few and far between but, while authentic swamp-pop has been relegated to the backwaters of pop appreciation, its echoes linger on in the laments of Dr John, Chas and Dave ('Ain't No Pleasing You') and Doug Sahm. Locally, there's an insatiable demand for new versions of swamp-pop favourites. Unaffected by the often bizarre musical fashions of the day, swamp-pop remains a living tradition from which young and old continue to draw strength and inspiration. BILL MILLAR

TRAVELIN' BAND

'San Francisco rock groups are now the dominant force in a popular music which is the most universal expression of attitudes and ideas we've ever seen,' wrote Ralph J. Gleason in the sleeve notes of Creedence Clearwater Revival's first album. 'Creedence Clearwater Revival is an excellent example of the Third Generation of San Francisco bands which gives every indication of keeping the strength of the San Francisco sound undiminished.'

Yet Creedence was very much more than just another San Francisco band – in fact the only thing they had in common with their contemporaries was geography. For whereas the prevailing trend in late-Sixties West Coast rock was toward psychedelic exploration, radical hippie sloganeering and complex 'progressive' fare, Creedence drew their inspiration from Fifties rock'n'roll, country and R&B, and their leader, John Fogerty, would later be recognised as a consummate stylist and all-round exponent of rock'n'roll's most enduring strongpoints. The group's great achievement was in appealing to pop and rock fans alike – their success in both the singles and albums market was phenomenal – and in this they were unique.

Were Creedence the Hot Hundred's fastest movers?

Creedence Clearwater Revival were two guitar-playing brothers, John Fogerty (born Berkeley, 28 May 1945) and Tom Fogerty (born 9 November 1941), bassist Stu Cook (born Oakland, 25 April 1945) and drummer Doug Clifford (born Palo Alto, 24 April 1945). They started playing rock'n'roll together during the late Fifties while attending high school in El Cerrito, a suburb of San Francisco's East Bay area.

By the time of the British beat invasion, the group were called the Blue Velvets, playing a mixture of current hit material and cutting their teeth on various Fifties rock'n'roll standards. As such they may well have remained in obscurity on the wrong side of the Bay had not record companies, fired by the success of the Beatles, been on the lookout for guitar groups of their own. As it was, in 1964 the Blue Velvets, who had released one flop single on the Orchestra label, auditioned for the local Fantasy label and were signed on condition they change their name to something more in keeping with the current beat trend.

As the Golliwogs, a name chosen by Fantasy, much to the group's embarrassment, they were to release seven singles on Fantasy and its affiliated Scorpio label. And while none of the records were hits, it's possible to trace the developing expertise and style of the band from the straight Beatles imitation, 'Don't Tell Me No Lies', through the rough-edged garage punk of 'Brown Eyed Girl' to the more refined and original 'Fight Fire' and 'Walking On The Water'.

Initially, Tom Fogerty had been responsible for most of the group's vocals and lead guitar work, but by the time of 'Brown Eyed Girl' younger brother John had taken charge of both departments, relegating Tom to rhythm. And in addition, John Fogerty would soon be writing most of the band's material.

Below, from left: Tom Fogerty, John Fogerty, Doug 'Cosmo' Clifford and Stu Cook. Despite their indefinable image, Creedence Clearwater Revival were to prove equally successful with the divided camps of singles buyers and progressive rock album fans.

Above: On stage in Paris, 1970. Inset top: a poster for London concerts the same year. Inset above: 'Proud Mary keeps on rollin'' – and announces a new single release.

On Christmas Eve 1967 the Golliwogs put paid to their tenuous and by now long outdated links with British beat and re-christened themselves Creedence Clearwater Revival, a name that evoked the southern swamplands of the bayou and the everglades. Their roots, or at least their hearts, lay in the raw blues-tinged sounds of the older musical capitals – Memphis, New Orleans, even Nashville. Creedence were an American band throughout but one that avoided the occasionally cloying self-consciousness of California brand leaders like the Beach Boys. Nor did they make a habit of paying lip-service to revolutionary cant.

With great encouragement from Saul Zaentz, who had bought Fantasy early in 1968 and who was a great believer in John Fogerty's talents, the group recorded their first album, *Creedence Clearwater Revival*, which was released in the early summer of 1968. The LP mixed standards, such as Screamin' Jay Hawkins' 'I Put A Spell On You' and Dale Hawkins' 'Suzie Q', with originals and, although John Fogerty's compositions lacked the maturity and confidence of his future offerings, the group's sound and performance were strong, fresh and original. The LP was greeted with much critical approval and sold surprisingly well for an unknown act, reaching Number 52 in the album charts. Later, 'Suzie Q' was released as a single and, in October, reached Number 11 in the singles charts.

Born on the Bayou

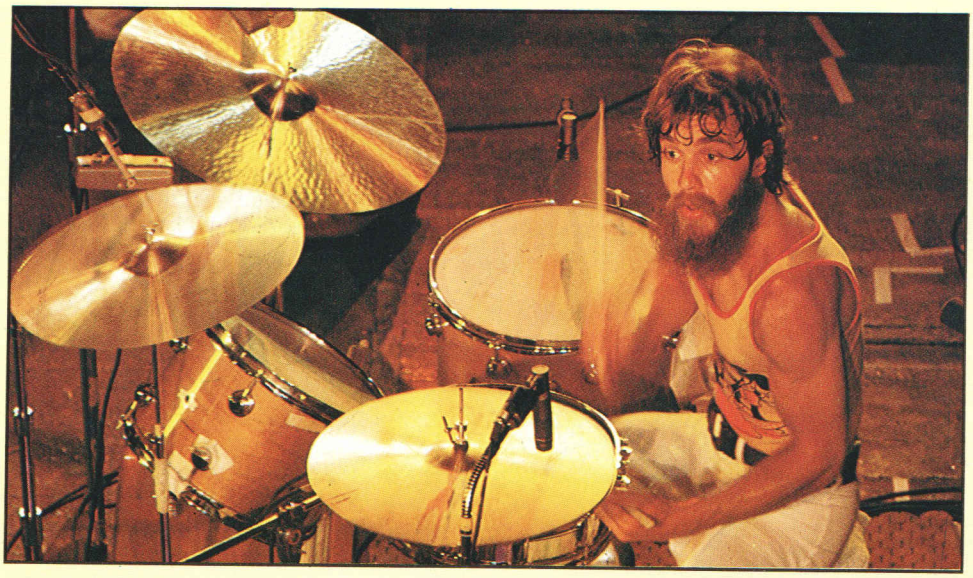
'Suzie Q' summed up Creedence's sound and musical formula perfectly; it was direct and instantly accessible, the churning, relentless rhythms of Cook, Clifford and Tom Fogerty providing an ideally simple backdrop for John's gravelly vocals and unmannered, vibrant guitar solos.

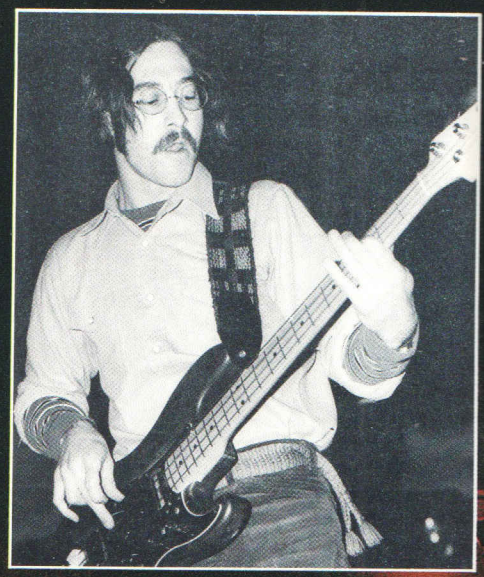
Apart from a version of 'Good Golly Miss Molly', all the songs on the group's next LP, *Bayou Country*, were written by John Fogerty, and they revealed, for the first time, his immense abilities. Released in January 1969, the album quickly reached Number 8 in the US LP charts while 'Proud Mary', a single drawn from the album, made it to Number 2. 'Proud Mary' rapidly established itself as a contemporary pop classic and was covered by Ike and Tina Turner, Solomon Burke and Elvis Presley among others.

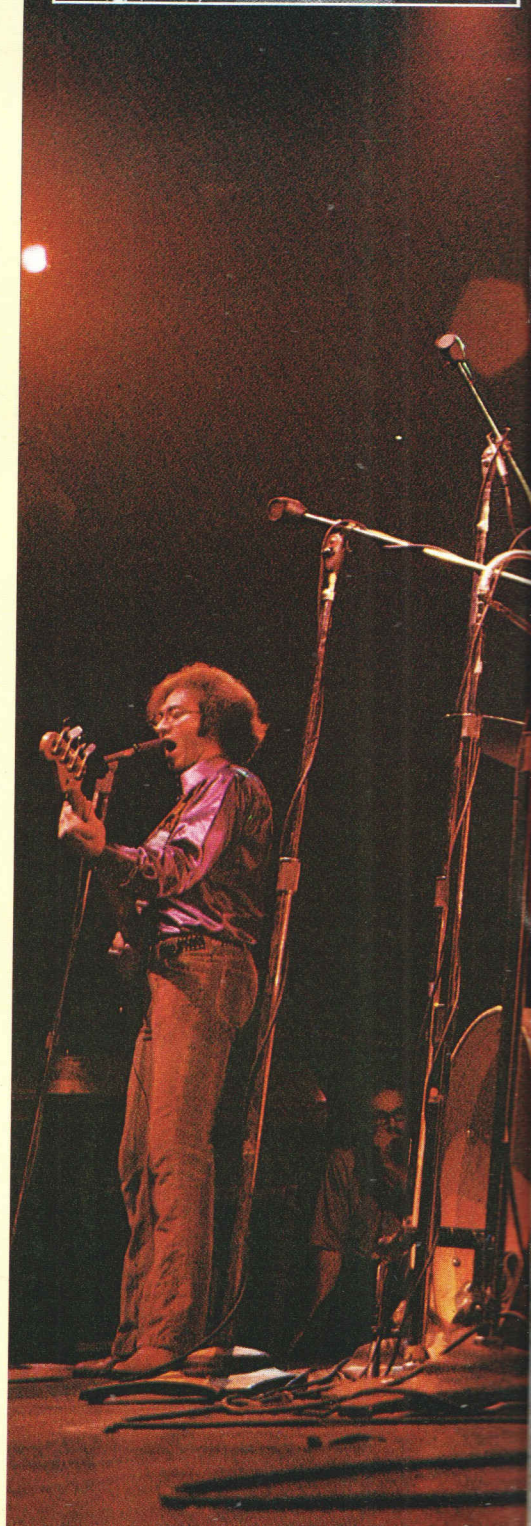
With *Bayou Country*, it had become apparent that no other writer of the era could match Fogerty's mastery of rock, soul and R&B. More important, his interpretative skills were allied to a unique vision that transformed the previously forgotten image of the 'devil's music' into something new and potent. Like Presley and Chuck Berry before him, Fogerty possessed both the imagination and the flair to generate recorded excitement and fuel a level of live energy that was missing in the more drawn out, narcotic excursions of the West Coast's other major outfits. Juke-boxes, radios and parties bore testimony to the Creedence appeal and Fogerty's seemingly inexhaustible supply of songs from the heartland, songs about trains, travelling, the promise of America and the failure.

Green River, released in August 1969, continued to increase Creedence Clearwater Revival's mass popularity, affording two massive hit singles in 'Bad Moon Rising' and the album's title track. Fogerty showed that he was not only a highly gifted writer but a prolific one, too, when in December Creedence released their third album of the year.

On *Willy And The Poor Boys*, John's romantic streak was balanced by a strong streak of reality, the LP benefiting from a core of social comment that was far more intelligent and tolerant than any futile call to arms. In particular, the song 'Fortunate Son' was an acutely powerful







rebuttal of privilege and authority, a song written in the voice and language of a working-class man with dignity and morals. Fogerty spoke out for the commoner, black or white, and his fight for welfare, a fair deal, a chance to escape the burden of grinding poverty and death-dealing patriotism.

'Fortunate Son' was the B-side of 'Down On The Corner', a jaunty, gospel-inflected number with an infectious backbeat, which reached Number 3 in the US charts in December 1969 and eventually sold more than a million copies. Singles success continued throughout 1970 – 'Travelin' Band' and 'Lookin' Out My Back Door' both reached Number 2, while 'Up Around The Bend' made it to Number 4.

The pendulum swings

These three singles were included on *Cosmo's Factory*, released in July, which remains possibly Creedence's finest album. It is the one that best indicates (particularly on the 11-minute version of 'I Heard It Through The Grapevine', which blended commercial directness with improvisation to perfect effect) the group's appeal to two distinct audiences – few, if any, other artists of the era were both teen-mag pin-ups and *Rolling Stone* interviewees.

After *Cosmo's Factory*, however, the rot began to set in. Somewhat inevitably for such a hugely commercial and successful band, rock critics began to turn against Creedence, suggesting they had nothing to offer but 'good-time' music. And, rather than ignoring the criticism, John Fogerty and group responded with *Pendulum*, an album on which they attempted to extend their basic formula to encompass more experimental arrangements and instrumentation. The chugging rhythm and biting lead guitar set-up which had, along with John Fogerty's grating voice, become trademarks of the Creedence sound, were now swamped by heavy-handed organ, saxes and vibes.

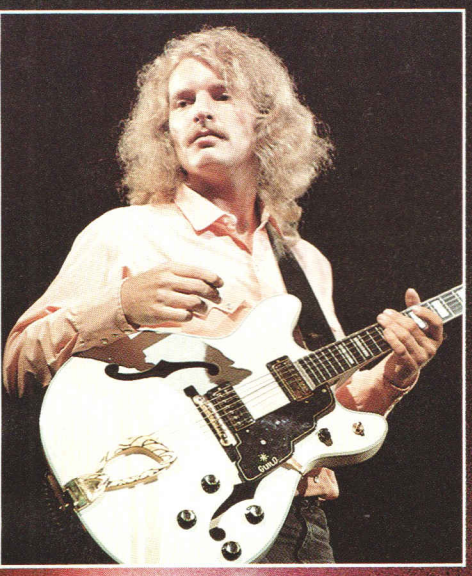
'*Cosmo's Factory* is what I consider to be the culmination of the whole thing,' John Fogerty told *Melody Maker* in 1974. 'My control of the band stopped somewhere in the middle of *Pendulum* – *Mardi Gras* was just out of the question.'

Above: Doug Clifford sweats it out behind the kit. Inset above right: Stu Cook – in search of the lost chord? Inset far right: Tom Fogerty and white Guild guitar. Feeling overshadowed by his younger brother, Tom quit the group in 1971. Thereafter, Creedence continued to record and perform as a three-piece (right).

Released in April 1972, *Mardi Gras* proved to be Creedence Clearwater Revival's final album. Tom Fogerty had quit the band after *Pendulum* in February 1971 to pursue a solo career and John now gave in to the demands of the other band members for more artistic freedom. As a result, only three of the LP's 10 tracks were John Fogerty compositions, the remainder being written and sung by Clifford or Cook. Unfortunately, the composing abilities of the bassist and drummer were limited and paled into insignificance alongside those of Fogerty; although another million-seller, *Mardi Gras* was an artistic disaster.

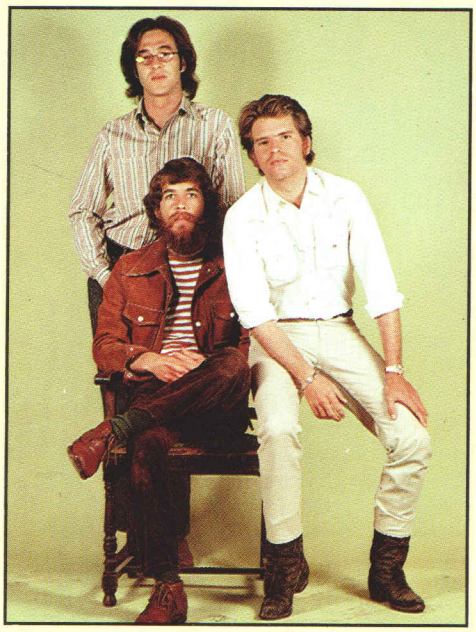
Creedence Clearwater Revival now split up with good grace, having amassed seven gold albums and a fistful of hit singles in just four years. Individually, all erstwhile members continued to record. Clifford came up with a solo album, *Doug 'Cosmo' Clifford*, before teaming up once more with Stu Cook in the Don Harrison Band in 1976. Cook also moved into production, working with the bizarre figure of ex-Thirteenth Floor Elevators singer Roky Erickson. Tom Fogerty, meanwhile, showed a surprising taste and variety both on his own solo albums and with the band Ruby in the late Seventies.

Naturally enough, though, it is John Fogerty's solo excursions that repay the closest investigation. His first move, once free of Creedence, was to assemble a collection of his favourite country songs, acknowledging another influence that was always a part of his songwriting. The resulting collection was released in 1973



under the title of *The Blue Ridge Rangers*. The Rangers were a group with a difference, for Fogerty played, arranged, sang and produced every last note – yet there was none of the grating excess and lack of discernment that mars most other similar ventures. Instead Fogerty displayed his usual good judgement, mixing gospel with country laments, blues with ballads, rags with rich uptempo love songs (one element of popular songwriting he rarely attempted himself). Where a new instrument like keyboards, violin, banjo or steel guitar was called for, Fogerty simply learned it – yet his dedication was never academic; his interpretation was always honest and fresh.

On a second solo album, *John Fogerty* (1975), he returned to rock'n'roll, combining numbers like 'Sea Cruise' and 'Lonely



After the Creedence trio (above) split up in 1972, John Fogerty (right) devoted his talents to a solo career.

Teardrops' with his own foot-stomping brand of music. Songs such as 'Almost Saturday Night' and 'Rockin' All Over The World' (a UK Number 3 hit for Status Quo in 1977) were every bit as good as the best of Creedence.

In 1975, there seemed no end to Fogerty's talent and no indication that his creativity and dedication would dry up. But 1976 brought the release of just one single, 'You Got The Magic', which scraped into the US charts at Number 87. Although original Creedence fans and newer admirers looked forward to further recordings, none were forthcoming. For whatever reason, Fogerty seemed unwilling or unable to further his reputation and although Asylum, his new label, granted his *Hoodoo* project a catalogue number, they reportedly rejected the completed album along with other work. It hardly mattered, though – the old Creedence swamp-rock classics remain a testament to John Fogerty's inspiration.

MAX BELL

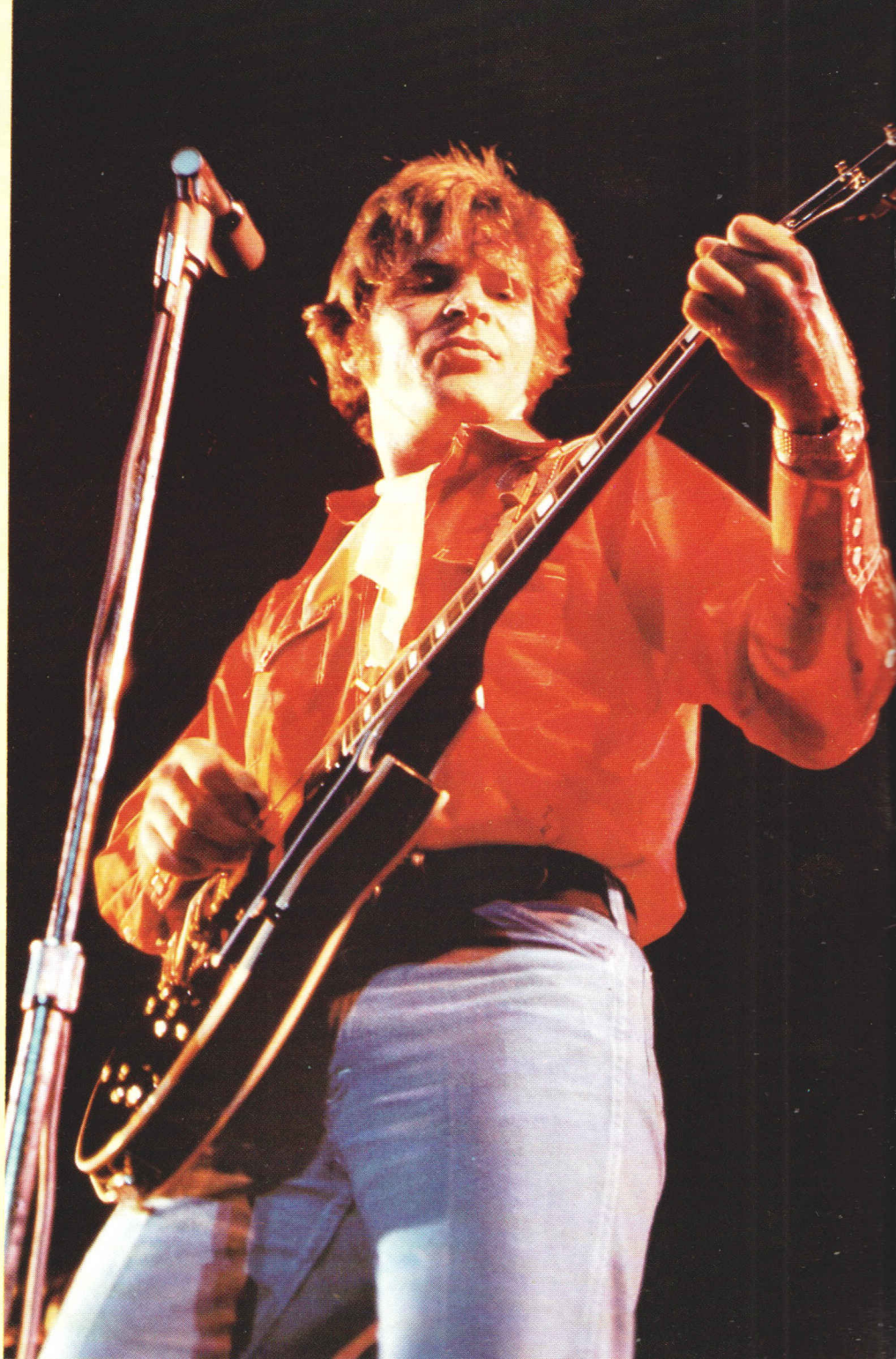
CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL Discography

As Tommy Fogerty and the Blue Velvets
Singles
Have You Ever Been Lonely/Bonita (Orchestra 1010, 1964).

As the Golliwogs
Singles
Don't Tell Me No Lies/Little Girl Does Your Mama Know (Fantasy 590, 1965); You Came Walking/Where You Been (Fantasy 597, 1965); You Got Nothin' On Me/You Can't Be True (Fantasy 599, 1965); Brown Eyed Girl/You Better Be Careful (Scorpio 404, 1966); Fight Fire/Fragile Child (Scorpio 405, 1966); Walking On The Water/You Better Get It Before It Gets You (Scorpio 406, 1967); Porterville/Call It Pretending (Scorpio 412, 1967).

As Creedence Clearwater Revival
Singles
Suzie Q. (Part 1)/Suzie Q. (Part 2) (Fantasy 616, 1968); I Put A Spell On You/Walk On The Water (Fantasy 617, 1968); Proud Mary/Born On The Bayou (Fantasy 619, 1969); Bad Moon Rising/Lodi (Fantasy 622, 1969); Green River/Commotion (Fantasy 625, 1969); Down On The Corner/Fortunate Son (Fantasy 634, 1969); Travelin' Band/Who'll Stop The Rain (Fantasy 637, 1970); Up Around The Bend/Run Through The Jungle (Fantasy 641, 1970); Long As I Can See The Light/Lookin' Out My Back Door (Fantasy 645, 1970); Have You Ever Seen The Rain/Hey Tonight (Fantasy 655, 1971); Sweet Hitch Hiker/Door To Door (Fantasy 665, 1971); Someday Never Comes/Tearin' Up The Country (Fantasy 676, 1972); I Heard It Through The Grapevine/Good Golly Miss Molly (Fantasy 759, 1976).

Albums
Creedence Clearwater Revival (Fantasy 8382, 1968); *Bayou Country* (Fantasy 8387, 1969); *Green River* (Fantasy 8393, 1969); *Willy And The Poor Boys* (Fantasy 8397, 1969); *Cosmo's Factory* (Fantasy 8402, 1970); *Pendulum* (Fantasy 8410, 1970); *Mardi Gras* (Fantasy 9404, 1972); *Live In Europe* (Fantasy CCR-1, 1974); *The Golliwogs – Pre-Creedence* (Fantasy 9474, 1975); *The Concert* (Fantasy MPF 4501, 1980).



THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Andy Summers

Above and overleaf: Andy Summers playing his famous Fender Telecaster, which he has customised himself with a humbucking pickup and integral battery-powered pre-amp.

Although Andy Summers came to wider attention in the late Seventies with the enormous success of the Police, he had been playing guitar for many years in a great variety of idioms, bringing this wealth of experience to bear upon his current eclectic style. He was born in 1942, and began playing when he was given a guitar at the age of 14. The first professional group Summers joined after moving to London in the early Sixties was the Zoot Money Big Roll Band, which metamorphosed into Dantalion's Chariot in the heady days of 1967. After that, Summers played in an early version of the Soft Machine which led to a stint with Eric Burdon's New Animals in the States.

After the New Animals broke up late in 1968, Summers is reported to have recorded a solo album in California, but it remains unreleased. He trained to play classical guitar at an American college, but eventually decided to get back to rock. After some work with Tim Rose in the States, he returned to England in the early Seventies and undertook pop touring for a few years with artists like Neil Sedaka and David Essex, as well as being involved with Kevin Coyne and Kevin Ayers.

By early 1978 Summers had started work on the first Police album, *Outlandos D'Amour*. The Police soon cast off their original punk guise to reveal themselves as an instrumentally proficient unit capable of producing classy, witty, well-played pop songs, owing no small measure of its musical prowess to Summers' light-fingered, effects-enhanced guitar sound.

Since 1972 Andy's favourite guitar for stage work has been his early Sixties Fender Telecaster, which he's modified over the years to the point where it now features a Gibson humbucking pickup and a built-in pre-amplifier. Connected to an overload switch, this enables Andy to turn rapidly from rhythm-playing to a strong solo sound, as on 'Driven To Tears' from *Zenyatta Mondatta*.

He has also had a phase switch added to the guitar for further tonal modification, and has modified the rear pickup to reduce the possibilities of unwanted feedback. Andy has used special effects to modify his guitar sound both in the studio and on stage with the Police. He has a personalised pedalboard – built for him by Pete Cornish – which includes phaser, flanger, chorus, analogue delay, compressor, fuzz and echo units, all of which can be pre-programmed in various combinations. Some of these effects can be heard on *Regatta De Blanc*'s title track, for example, and even more obviously when the Police play live.

Electronic effects have been put to specific uses in the Police to create a distinctive sound quality. As Andy explained in 1981: 'In the Police, the gadgetry that's been employed has been integrated into the music. It's not just an enhancement, it's part of the music. You identify that sound so much with the song that it's part of the music.'

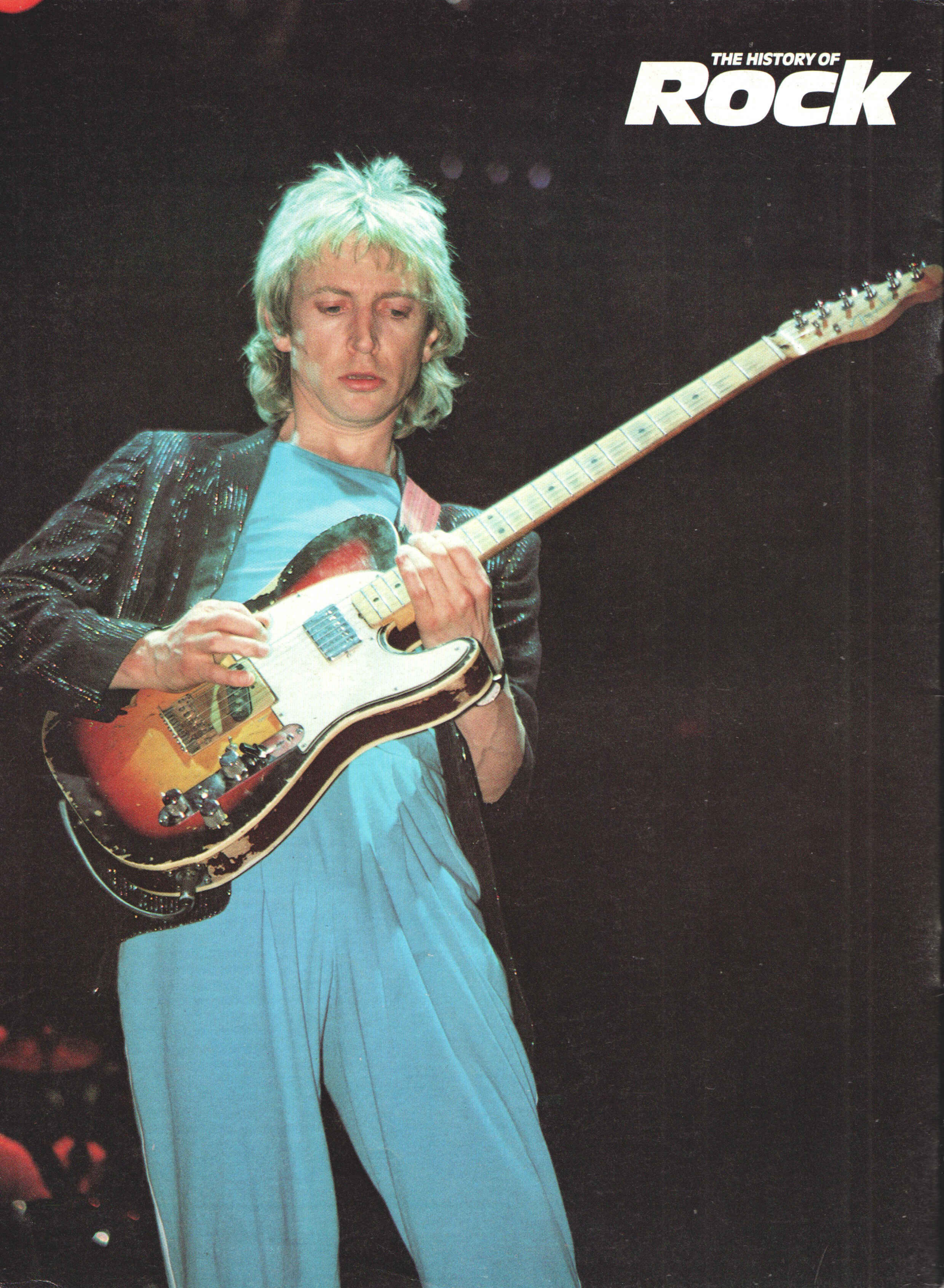
The sound of Summers' guitar in the Police is further characterised by the simple understatement of 'Roxanne' and 'Walking On The Moon'. He will often play just two or three-note chords, rather than going for the standard heavy trio approach where the guitarist tends to use five or six-note barre chords. His classical training is betrayed by such numbers as *Regatta*'s 'Bring On The Night', where he plays classical arpeggios up and down the fretboard through a flanger.

For amplification on stage, Summers uses the ubiquitous British Marshall heads and cabinets, again modified to his exact requirements by Pete Cornish. In the studio, he also uses various Roland amplifiers, and tends to experiment more widely with guitars; on *Ghost In The Machine* he hardly used the Telecaster at all, opting for a Fender Stratocaster, a Gibson 335 and a Les Paul. Summers owns various other guitars, including Gibson, Guild and Recording King acoustics, an Arivez classical guitar, and various custom-built electrics built for him by Paul Hamer in Illinois. He's also used the Roland guitar synthesiser unit, which enables the player to achieve some of the sounds usually associated with keyboard-controlled synthesisers, and which Summers tends to use for chordal, atmospheric sounds.

The process involved in recording the solo for Andy's self-written 'Omega Man' on *Ghost In The Machine* shows the degree of experimentation involved in a typical Police session. First he put down a jazzy solo with his semi-acoustic 335 against the backing track, but it was felt that this was too straight and rather too derivative for the Police. Then he tried plugging the guitar synthesiser through some effects for a much wilder, off-the-wall sound; it excited the onlookers in the control room, but the rest of the band weren't so enthusiastic. Andy eventually put down a deceptively simple-sounding solo with the guitar synth filling out the sound behind it.

In 1982, Andy completed an LP of instrumental, guitar-based music, *I Advance Masked*, with fellow Dorset guitarist Robert Fripp. It saw him indulging himself even more in effects and synthesisers; indeed, as much as any synthesiser player, Summers is an instrumentalist of the technological age. Notwithstanding his expertise and years of experience as a guitarist, he first achieved fame after he began to employ electronic effects as an integral part of his guitar sound.

TONY BACON


THE HISTORY OF
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